Potosi Wisconsin Territory
Saturday October 18th 1845

My Dear Mother

I have again great pleasure in commencing a letter to you in this far off land. I do assure you that reading letters which come from home and writing to you are among my most pleasurable employments. This is Saturday the 11th of October. I am now expecting a letter from you every week, and I hope before I send this that I shall receive one but I have so much to say that I think it best to begin mine before I receive yours. I expect you will be some surprised to find that I have again removed, or rather that this is not dated at Pedlars Creek, it is true that I have left that place, and while I tell you this my eyes fill and overflow with tears. May God sustain me. My feelings will scarcely allow me to write; for I have left kind and valued friends, and I have come to, I hardly know where, only this I know, that I am again amongst strangers. But I look to Heaven as my ultimate and eternal resting place and home. I felt it to be my duty to come here and I think I came cheerfully. If I had consulted my temporal interests I should have remained where I was. But in order that I may attend to what I consider to be duty, I immolate interest on the altar of Christian principle. I have done this oftener than once and I believe that God has rewarded me for it. I believe that I have given up all to follow Christ. And if He deigns to be my guide and friend I shall be satisfied. The reason why I am here is this: I have been received on probation by the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church and have been appointed to this place. When I left home little over a year ago, I never intended nor expected to enter the ministry, and I took no step towards this. I simply preached the Gospel as I had opportunities, as,
I believed the dispensation of it was entrusted to me. The Church called me out & here I am, hoping and praying and laboring to be useful. The Conference was held at Peoria, about the centre of the State of Illinois, the third week in August, but I could not come out here till towards the end of September and then I did not remain. I left Pedlars Creek on Friday the 26th of Sep and travelled about thirty miles to a place called Lancaster. The weather was warm and pleasant and I had a delightful drive. This was the first time I had been out in that part of the Country, and tho' alone I quite enjoyed myself. I could not refrain from wishing that some of you had been along with me. For the first twenty miles I rode along Prairie, but most of that distance there was timber on each hand, varying in distance from the road, from a few yards to a mile or two. And in all that distance of twenty miles I saw but three or four fields and generally I could see for miles in every direction. The road I came along is the military road from Madison the capital of the territory to Prairie du Chien near the Mississippi River. It has been laid out on what is called a dividing ridge, that is, elevated land which divides one river from another. I have been told that the land for a mile on each side of the road all the distance has been bought chiefly by speculators, as it is near a great public road they expect it will sell high, and this I expect is the reason why so little of it is in cultivation as it would be very difficult to find a healthier, richer, or more delightful country. I expect that some of it might be bought for a little over what it cost, as taxes are to pay on it whether it is improved or not and some of the owners I expect are becoming tired of doing this. For ten or twelve miles my road lay through timber much of it of a good quality. Saturday 27th This morning I started soon after I had taken breakfast, it was the time of holding court to try offenders against the law. A juror who has been set at liberty rode with me to
Potosi. I suppose you will wonder what kind of a conveyance I had. I (here called a buggy) had a first rate pony and what you would call a phaeton. I generally took them when I had to go to preach anywhere and often have I thought when a journeying that I would have liked you to have been with me that you might see, and seeing like this country. I reached this place about noon. The distance from Lancaster here is about twelve miles, on the road are some very large and valuable farms. Sunday the 28th. A very fine day. I see by the plan that George Metcalfe was appointed to Askrigg. I preached but once, at eleven O'clock A.M. and held a prayer meeting in the evening. I preached this day my first sermon at my first Conference appointment. (It may be my last) On Monday I should have returned home but in the morning the weather was quite unfavorable, so I remained till Tuesday the 30th and then had a cold and shoryery drive. I returned home by another and nearer road. (Pedlar's Creek is about 30 miles from here) I went by Matthew Willis's place, being about a quarter of a mile out of my way. I found them as emigrants to this country are often found at first, with a house in its infancy, which could not boast of ability to keep outside either rough weather or fine, either light or darkness. But it possessed one excellent property, it was capable of improvement (would that we all were) and since I then saw it I am thankful to be able to say it has received it. I found them all cheerful and content and in good health, with the exception of the youngest boy which is only feeble. I warmed myself and had a cup of coffee. I told them by way of consolation that they had no rent to pay. Matthew smiled and said he had been talking about that just before. I am glad they have removed from the place they were at before, as I suppose its moral state is almost desperate. The people are notorious whiskey drinkers, and when I say that you may infer the rest. I do think that there is not a worse place in Wisconsin. And Matthew would be
likely to form an unfavorable opinion of America if he judged of it by those he was amongst before he removed to his farm.

I came out here again on Saturday the 4th inst. Or rather I came as far as Platteville 18 miles from the Creek, and there met the Presiding Elder who was holding the Quarterly meeting for that Circuit. I dined with him at a friend's house. He wished me to remain with him all night, as this was the first time I had seen him, and desiring to have some information from him I consented. I was also influenced by a desire to hear him preach in the evening. After dinner we came to our quarters about half a mile from the town and after I was quite reconciled to remain all night, he told me to my astonishment that I must preach for him. Oh what I would have given for liberty! I thought how delightful it would have been if I had now been driving through the woods. But his place was to command and mine was to obey. I had a very attentive auditory and felt quite comfortable. The Elder and I stayed with an old gentleman, a devoted Methodist, who is 81 years old. He was brought up in the state of Virginia, and was there the owner of considerable property and several slaves. But Slavery he could not do with, so he liberated his negroes (I think 26 in number) sold his estate for 20 thousand dollars and removed to the west. He has three sons who are Methodist Ministers all of them belong to this Conference, one is Book Agent at Cincinnati (J T Mitchell) who I am told is a very fine man. Indeed all his sons are talented. Sunday the 5th Oct a cold, frosty but clear morning I reached Potosi about 8 past 10 preached at eleven A.M and again at 6 P.M. On Monday I again returned to the Creek. You will probably have been wondering why I acted in this way. Why after I had received this appointment I did not come at once. I will tell you. You are aware that my "goods and chattels" were left by me at English Prairie when I again "emigrated" further west. I did not want to
come here to remain till I had them with me. I could not very conveniently go myself to Peters, tho' I much wished to do so, therefore I sent a person for them. He returned to Mineral Point that being his place of residence, last Tuesday evening. I had not an opportunity of seeing him since he came back and he brought no letter, tho' I wished Peters to send me one, so that I do not know how they are. But I judge that they are all well. Peter had gone to Chicago - She-Ka go - with wheat. If the road should be good for sleighing (does Elizabeth not wish that she could be with me) this winter I hope I may be able to go and see them. Thursday the 9th October. A year today since I reached Peter Sill's house, about 9 o'clock in the evening. Mrs Sill told me one day after my arrival that when she first saw me she thought I looked very pale and thoughtful, and no wonder after what I had passed through the five previous weeks. I daresay she expected I should soon be in my grave, and wondered what I had come to America for. But I must return to the 9th Oct 1845. I expected to leave Mr Wasley's today, as he had been at the Point the day before, and learned that a person would be along with my luggage and would bring me out here. I received this day two nos of the Watchman which Edward had started on the 28th of August. I felt very thankful for them as they came very opportunely, but I looked for a letter also. Mr. W settled with me; at the time he did so I thought I had not so much to receive as he paid me but did not think anything about it. Afterwards on looking at the day book I found he had given me twenty dollars more than my due, I told him he had made a mistake, he said that it was a designed one. This was so unexpected that I could make no reply. He has thus given me thirty dollars over our agreement, ten to make the first two months 15$ a month, and twenty when I left him. Such kindness I know I am unworthy of for though I have endeavoured to do my duty I have done nothing
more. I did not hear from Conference till I had quite given up expecting an appointment. I told Mr. Wasley that I thought I should not be called out, he said he hoped I should not; and that if I remained with him he would increase my salary. I have no doubt but he would have given me a considerable advance. He told me he was very sorry I was going to leave, and that if from sickness or any other cause I should need a home I should find one at his house. You may be sure that I left the Creek with a sorrowful heart; this was indeed the case. I could say but little and my feelings could only find expression in sobs and tears. And though I was sorrowful I rejoiced that Christ was my portion and that I had an opportunity to evidence my love to him and his cause. My heart says unto God "here am I". And when he directs I desire to go. Had I remained with Mr. W. I intended to purchase some land and as I was able make improvements. Had I done so it is likely that in 3 or 4 years I should have had a very comfortable home of my own, and a farm that would have maintained you all. But my affections are not placed on anything on the Earth, that is, in such a way as to cause sorrow when my projects are frustrated. In the afternoon my Boxes &c (my bed and bedding are still at English Prairie) were brought, and after we had been parted for eight months I was again privileged to behold them, and rejoice over them as we do when we meet old and respected friends. I sometimes think that I could have done without them as when I turn over their contents home with its associations appears with almost overpowering freshness to my mind. I am constantly meeting with something to remind me of my friends and relations and their kindness. We got to this place in the afternoon of Friday the 10th Inst, having staid all night on our way out. I have been very kindly received by the people and I think I shall feel at home among them. This place is what is called a Station, not a circuit. My labors will have to be confined
chiefly to one place viz Potosi. The people expect me to preach twice each Sabbath, but not oftener without I like. Sometimes I expect I shall preach to them on a week night. I made an appointment for next Thursday evening (this is Monday the 13th Oct) Besides this I shall sometimes go during the week to a place about a mile off where there is a small class. And perhaps every other Sunday in the afternoon to another place distant two miles. But if I do this a horse will be provided.

I am told there are about 15 hundred inhabitants in this town and vicinity, so that it is a place of some importance. I do not yet know how many persons belong to the Church, I expect about one hundred. I find religion is at a low ebb, and a too general indifference prevails, but I think there are a few who are right and who desire and pray for the prosperity of Zion and the peace of Jerusalem. There are probably good reasons to be given for the present cold state of the Church: The principal of which is that there has not been sufficient ministerial labor among them of late. They have no Local Preachers and those sent by Conference for the last two years, have not been much with them, owing to sickness and absence. They have been for weeks at a time without any preaching. I hope the people may get tired of stations and only have circuits, as I think the latter suit better the economy of Methodism. Tho' so far as I am concerned I like Stations better, as they rather agree with my studious habits, tho' circuits are probably better for the health. I am upon the whole quite satisfied with my appointment, but if the matter had been left to myself I should have chosen a less responsible charge. A newplace of worship has lately been erected by the members of the Methodist Church here which is not quite finished it is a large substantial building the basement story of stone the rest of brick 26 by 18 feet inside. It would have been completed before now but it is not so well situated as it might have
been, and some talk about taking it down again to place in a central situation. I have preached in it once, but in cold weather we occupy the old church on account of the Stove which is in it. I must not forget to tell you that this place is very near the Mississippi River. I have not seen "the father of waters" yet but I intend to pay him a visit before I mail this letter and will try to tell you how he looks. Friday Oct 17th I have been much engaged since I opened the above. I have met the building committee twice since I came and happy to say that they have resolved if possible to complete the new Church so that we can worship in it this winter. They have two new Stoves and a Gentleman has promised to give a considerable portion of the pipes. So that I hope we shall get along and be quite comfortable. There has been much sickness in this part this summer, and several deaths. I have had a funeral to attend almost every day I have been here. It is usual in this country to preach a Sermon on the decease of every person, young and old, sinner or saint, and as at present I am the only minister in the place I have had enough to do in this way. But I have not preached at every funeral I have attended, I have had to postpone some to a "convenient season" say an evening or Sabbath. I have had to perform the last duties of my office at the grave of countrymen. Last Wednesday I attended the funeral of a Mr $caife who formerly lived at a Mill near Dall Bank, probably my Grandfather may remember him. You must not be alarmed for my safety when I tell you of sickness and death, and that I am in the midst of them. I am quite willing to depart and be with Christ because I know it is far better than remaining here. But if it be the Divine will that I should live a little longer God can shield me. I apprehend that there is not much danger as the most sickly season has gone. All places in the vicinity of rivers are subject more or less to ague and bilious fever in the summer and fall. But persons who have lived here
for many years tell me that this is not an unhealthy place considering its situation. I see by one No of the Watchman you sent last, that a young man with whom I became intimate when in London has been taken to heaven. We were together at Dr Alders and lodged in adjoining rooms. When we had a little leisure we were together. We wandered in company through the streets of the metropolis, visited the Tower Zoological Gardens Regents Park, and other objects of curiosity and interest. The British Museum &c &c. He gave me his address at Birmingham that I might write to him. We appeared to be of one heart and one mind. He was called to Africa and has become a Martyr to Christian zeal. But I believe we shall meet again. If I mistake not he was the only son of his mother and she was a widow. Heavy news for her but I expect that grace which enabled her to lay her son on the Missionary alter is now her support. May I be faithful that I may meet my friends who have gone before.

I have very comfortable lodgings. I have a room to myself and no one to interfere with my quiet except I am wanted about Church matters. The person I am with is married and has one child five months old. They are members of the M.E.Church, and pious intelligent people. My host I find has been a considerable wanderer, and can tell many thrilling incidents experienced in his travels. He has been among several tribes of indians on one occasion he was robbed by a party of them and had seven muskets pointed to his breast at once. He spoke to them in their own language and that saved him. He has been a hunter and trapper and trader in the western wilds. The Indian summer has this day begun. It will probably continue for two or three weeks. There is always some cold weather and frost before it commences. I took a short walk this morning, and soon discovered the difference between today and the few previous days. Indeed we have had some very cold weather for the last three weeks. During the Indian summer (as it is called) we have
a cloudless but grey and hazy looking sky, at the horizon especially it has quite a smoky appearance. The days are quite mild and warm, but the nights cold. A man has just been here to ask me to marry a couple tomorrow but as I am not in orders I am not able to tie them together. I felt somewhat sorry but I must submit for the present. There are a great number of English about this place many of them from Yorkshire. The other day I saw a woman, a member of the Church, from Whitaside. She has been in this country about fifteen years, I think she said her name was Spencely. Her present name is Lightfoot, her husband is a Class leader. I also heard of one Stephen Dinsdale from Thoralby he has been residing about lately but has gone off for a few days, or I expect I should have seen him. Several persons from Swaledale, I find, are about Dubuque fifteen miles down the River on the Iowa side. Mr Robinson of Semmerdale Hall has a Son at Galena, a Physician. He called at the Creek one day to see me, but I was from home; I was sorry for it as I should have been glad to see him. I think he told Mr W. that he was born at Askirgg. Lately there has been considerable disturbance near the Mormon Settlement at Nauvoo, the particulars will probably have reached you through the papers. For the past week I have heard nothing. I therefore judge that peace has been restored. I did hear that the Mormons promised to leave Nauvoo in the Spring, if so the inhabitants will be satisfied as the Mormons are not desirable neighbours. Several persons were killed and considerable property destroyed by both parties. Outbreaks of this kind are generally magnified by distance. It is probable that in England you will see a whole country in arms, and very likely on fire. I have conversed with different individuals from the neighbourhood where the disturbance has been; they come and go on business as tho' nothing had happened, and can leave their friends and families without fear. I expect this place is about 150 miles from
Nanyo.

I expect I shall hear by your next letter, what Barzillac, Mr Walker, my cousin Matthew &c intend to do, respecting emigrating. Anything I can do for any of them will be done heartily, and with pleasure. But my means are quite limited so that they must not expect much from me. I have done the best when I have most depended upon myself and upon God. "Go thou and do likewise," But I am at the service of my friends to the extent of my power.

My sheet is almost full. I think I will send this before without waiting for yours, for I cannot tell when it may arrive. This is my fourth long letter without one from home. One before and this to you. One to Thomas Lawson, and one to George Metcalfe. It thus appears that I am resolved not to forget you.

When a letter is received from me I wish you would send a newspaper immediately, and put on the right hand corner of the first page the date when the letter was received. Only put the date. I am looking for the Watchman which contains the Stations of the Preachers.

I want you all to remember that ½ an oz. of news &c can now come to me for 12 cents. I have heard nothing from W. Hargrave. If I send you a paper with a date on the right hand corner, first page top, I shall have received a letter.

If your next letter needs answering I shall probably write again as soon as I receive it.

I must now bring my letter to a close. I desire still to have an interest in all your prayers, as I need them now more than ever. I am encouraged & strengthened when I remember that my friends in England call upon God in my behalf. I often think of the kind remembrance of me by my friend Francis Morton and others.

If I could visit my native home and country in a few years, I
should have great pleasure in doing so. But I hardly dare flatter myself, even with the thought of this: What may betide me I know not, but I hope I shall be in the hands and under the protection of God. I sometimes imagine that I shall never again see you on earth, so transient and uncertain is human life. But my dear Mother let us live for heaven, and then we shall have an endless union. I continue to pray for you all. You cannot think how much I am concerned that my brothers and sisters should be virtuous, holy and happy. I want us all to meet above. Give my love to all my relatives and friends as if named. And let me hear from you as often as convenient.

I am most affectionately yours,

Matthew Dinsdale

[P.S.] I have seen part of the Mississippi; there are several islands and much timber near the River so that I have not been able to see the main stream. I intend to tell you something about this wonderful river at another time. Grant River runs between Potosi and the Mississippi, and I have not been over the Grant yet.